

Influence of Greek on the Speech of a Greek Gypsy Community

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This paper deals with the influence exerted by a host language (Greek) upon a minority language in Greece (Romany). It is based on oral data which I collected in 1973–4 in the suburb of Agia Varvara a few miles north-west of Athens where several hundred Gypsies have long resided.* After describing the pertinent sociological factors which regulate the interaction of Greeks and Gypsies in this community, I shall discuss the linguistic evidence which is mainly drawn from convergent vocabulary and idiom but not exclusively; there are at least strong hints that some influence may also have been exerted by Greek on the phonological and the morphological level.

Gypsies are to be found all over mainland Greece and in some of the Greek islands. The Greek Government does not have reliable statistics on their numbers, and this for a variety of reasons. Many Gypsies still wander from place to place (increasingly, as migratory farm workers), and their nationality from the Greek standpoint is sometimes not firmly established. The Agia Varvara community recommended itself to me because it was readily accessible, both in the physical sense of being convenient to downtown Athens and because the Gypsies who are found there live a relatively settled life and are therefore more approachable.

* I wish to express my gratitude to the National Endowment for the Humanities which granted me a Senior Fellowship to carry out this project. I am also grateful to Prof. Elias Dimitras, formerly Director of the Greek National Centre of Social Research, and his assistant, Dr. Grigorios Gizelis, for much friendly advice and practical assistance.

This is basically a working-class community, but by Greek standards living conditions have improved in the last few years as evidenced by a good deal of new apartment construction. Most of the businesses are on or very near to one central street, and living quarters lie off to either side of it. Gypsies and Greeks alike live in small houses or apartments, but some of the Gypsy dwellings are extremely poor and primitive.

Some of the Gypsies are employed in the various local businesses, a very few even run shops, but many live by hawking various commodities in the Athens–Piraeus area. Except for very young children, all the Gypsies are bilingual and if literate are literate in Greek. The children often attend Greek public schools, though some, perhaps the majority, for no more than two to four years. These Gypsies profess the Greek Orthodox religion and occasionally intermarry with Greeks. Within the last few years only, it has not been unusual for some Gypsy men to complete Greek military service; so far, ten or twelve have reportedly done so in Agia Varvara. Some Gypsies hold Greek passports to travel or work outside of Greece, a privilege which would have been unheard of before the last war. Such concessions indicate that the social and economic status of these Gypsies, while still low, has undoubtedly improved. Nevertheless, they are still near the bottom of the social scale, as far as most Greeks are concerned; it is symptomatic that the Mayor of Agia Varvara, when I consulted him, admitted that he has virtually no contact with his Gypsy constituency.

My main informants were all illiterate with the exception of a few young people with some Greek schooling. Four of my oldest informants (65 to 80) spoke Turkish as their first foreign language. Of these, one was born on the island of Lemnos, the other three in Turkey, and all four had come to mainland Greece some time between 1925 and 1930. All the other informants spoke only Greek and Romyani.

I should point out that access to these or other Gypsies is by no means a simple matter. They are, often with good reason, suspicious of all outsiders. Furthermore, most of them earn their living at a level of bare subsistence, so that they are fully occupied with their own affairs during the day and have little or no leisure. These informants came from two separate and unrelated family groupings to whom I was originally

introduced by intermediaries. The first such grouping consisted of a widow, her two teen-age sons and her aged mother-in-law. The second was an elderly couple now living by themselves but with five grown children whose lives to date very well illustrate the increasing Gypsy integration in Greek society which I mentioned above. Of the three daughters, two have spent time in Germany as members of the extensive Greek Gastarbeiter force there (both serving as cleaning women); the third daughter was issued a Greek passport to travel for pleasure with her husband to Sweden and France. This latter couple owns an automobile, a sign of unusual wealth in this Gypsy community. Of the two sons, both in prison during this period on charges of dealing in hashish, one is married to a Greek woman born in Agia Varvara; one of the daughters, previously married to a Gypsy, is now living with a Greek in Agia Varvara. One of the sons has performed professionally as a singer. This is of some significance, for a few Gypsies have acquired fame in Greece as musicians, although their achievements are less impressive than those of their counterparts in Spain or Rumania. It is reputed that Gypsy influence is strong in the sphere of Greek popular music known as *rebetika* (ρεμπέτικα); some Romany words are said to be included in the highly differentiated private language used by singers of *rebetika*.¹

Although my informants and the various casual contacts made through them with neighbouring Gypsies constitute an inadequate sampling of the Agia Varvara Gypsy community, it is reasonable to suppose that many if not a majority of these people were originally of Turkish Gypsy origin. Their Romany dialect contains a number of features which tend to confirm this.

1. Ilias Petropoulos has published a glossary of this terminology (Γλωσσάριο τῶν ρεμπέτηδων (Athens, 1968), unfortunately not available to me. This same author has also published a glossary of another even more exotic jargon, *kaliardá* (Καλιαρντά, Athens, 1971), which he claims is used by Greek homosexuals: some of the entries cited with no indication of their origin are demonstrably borrowed from Romany, e.g. ἡ πουρή· γριά (Romany *phuri* 'old woman') or λατσός· ώραῖος, καλός (Romany *latšo* 'good'). A selection of rebetic songs, in Greek with English translations, is available in *Rebetika: Songs from the Old Greek Underworld*, ed. Katharine Butterworth and Sara Schneider (Athens, 1975); the same volume contains essays by Elias Petropoulos on the history of rebetika, by Markos Dragoumis on rebetic music, by Ted Petrides on rebetic dances, and by Sakis Papadimitriou on 'rebetika and blues'.

In addition to easily identified Turkish loanwords like *denizi* 'sea' or *hergyun* 'every day', there is the conspicuous use of *in* as a negation in place of *na* (e.g. *in diklas-man* 'he didn't see me'). Over a hundred years ago the famous Greek doctor and linguist, Alexandre G. Paspatis, called attention to this trait² as characteristic of the speech used by the wild Turkish Gypsies then called Zapari, 'les gens les plus farouches de cette race'.³

These Gypsies, as I have indicated above, are necessarily in constant contact with their Greek hosts. Bilingualism is a way of life: Romany is for family use while Greek, meaning of course demotic Greek, is for outside use, especially for all official or business purposes. Under these circumstances, the impact of Greek has naturally been most strongly felt where it filled in the gaps to express concepts for which the inherited Romany vocabulary furnished no equivalent. Even when Romany had an equivalent, the prestige of the host language has sometimes prevailed, as has frequently happened elsewhere when Romany speakers are in intimate contact with speakers of another language.

Before I start to document the chief points at which this dialect of Romany shows the influence of modern Greek, it might not be amiss to sketch out in broad outline some much more general similarities between the two languages. Both are inflected Indo-European languages and share many structural features such as the categories of number (singular and plural), gender (three in Greek, only two in Romany), person distinguished in the verbal system and also by appropriate pronouns, and a system of case endings in the noun (for the most part not genetically related in the two languages but functionally similar). Greek and Romany both have a definite article. The earliest investigators of Romany (Fr. Miklosich, A. G. Paspatis, R. von Sowa) believed that the Romany article was in fact a borrowing from Greek; John Sampson argued that on the contrary the Romany article originated within Indic,⁴ and this

2. *Études sur les Tchingianés ou Bohémiens de l'Empire Ottoman* (Constantinople, 1870), pp. 385–6 (hereafter, Paspatis).

3. Paspatis, p. 22.

4. *The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales, being the older form of British Romany preserved in the speech of the clan of Abram Wood* (Oxford, 1926; reprinted 1968), pp. 151–2, 247 (hereafter, Sampson).

view has been generally accepted. In both languages the verbal paradigms are largely based on a two-stem system, one of which is used to form a present and an imperfect tense, the other to form a preterite. This is again a functional similarity only, since the historical development is in each case quite different. (Also, the elaboration of this two-stem system in Greek to differentiate aspects does not concern us here.)

How far Balkan traits in Greek can be also identified in Greek Romany is a difficult question,⁵ but at least the formation of the future is an obvious example: Gk. Romany *avel* 'comes' *kamavel* 'will come' cf. Greek *πίνει* 'drinks' *θα πίνει* 'will be drinking' (but the Greek aspect distinction of imperfective and perfective future is not found in Greek Romany). In both languages (as of course in other Balkan languages as well)⁶ a schematized particle meaning 'wish' is the future formant, Romany *kam*, Greek *θα* older *θὲ νά* cf. *θέλω* 'I wish'. In Greek Romany, *kamav* 'I love, I want' cf. Sanskrit *kam-* 'wish, love', the usual word in other dialects, does not seem to have survived in general use and has been replaced in these meanings by *mangav*; in this dialect therefore, although *kam* as elsewhere is derived from the verb *kamav*, here it is merely a fossilized remnant.

I should like now to begin this study of Greek influence on Greek Romany by calling attention to a phonological development which puzzled me when I first began collecting my data. I had several times recorded *šukar* 'beautiful', an extremely common Romany word in many dialects, e.g. in the glossaries to Sampson, Serboianu,⁷ and Gjerdman and Ljungberg.⁸ Later, however, a 40-year-old woman clearly pronounced the word as

5. An article by R. Uhlik in *Godišnjak*, X (Sarajevo, 1973), and not available to me deals with the Balkanisms of Yugoslav Romany. As summarized by D. S. Kendrick in the new journal *Roma* (sponsored by the Indian Institute of Romani Studies, Chandigarh, India, June, 1974–), I, 2, p. 63 (January 1975), these not unexpectedly include 'anticipation, the ethical dative, analytic formation of the future and subjunctive replacing infinitive'.

6. See Kr. Sandfeld, *Linguistique balkanique* (Paris, 1930), pp. 180–4 (hereafter, Sandfeld).

7. C. J. Popp Serboianu, *Les Tsiganes: Histoire-Ethnographie-Linguistique-Dictionnaire* (Paris, 1930) [hereafter, Serboianu]

8. Olof Gjerdman and Erik Ljungberg, *The Language of the Swedish Coppersmith Gypsy Johan Dimitri Taikon* (Copenhagen, 1963 [hereinafter, Gjerdman-Ljungberg]).

sukar. (It is true that both forms are recorded in Paspatis, with an indication, however, that the latter form was more frequent.) When subsequently I listened to a 15-year-old Gypsy boy, I heard not only *sukar* but also *dzav* 'I go' instead of *džav*, the form used by other informants. It turned out that in this boy's speech, as in that of two other young Gypsies, I observed a systematic displacement of *š*, *dž*, *tš* towards *s*, *dz*, *ts* (the last occurs in the Turkish loanword *hiš* 'nothing'). This is precisely the series of changes which occurred whenever Turkish words were borrowed into Greek, and the effect is clearly tantamount to speaking Romany with a Greek accent. Naturally, one cannot assume a phonological trend on the basis of so limited a number of speakers, but on the other hand I can safely say that these three young Romany speakers, perhaps under the influence of their Greek companions, have at least begun to apply Greek pronunciation patterns to Romany. No doubt in the case of a few words like *šukar/sukar*, where usage is still floating, some adult speakers are free to choose either variant.

In morphology also there has been at least limited convergence. First of all, while identity of form in the nominative of the definitive article (masculine singular *o* and feminine singular *i*) is hardly surprising if the Romany article was taken over from Greek, it is much more so if the article was developed independently. As is well known, there are variations even in these forms of the Romany article. In the American Kalderash dialect,⁹ for example, the respective forms are *o* and *e*. The selection of *o* and *i* may be more than mere chance in the case of a speaker who uses the identical forms in Greek.

A more significant, though admittedly still slight morphological convergence occurs in the words for 'grandfather' and 'uncle', *papo* and *kak*. Both these terms are found in a great many Romany dialects,¹⁰ usually in a single form each.¹¹ Gjerdman-Ljungberg list *papo* and *kako* but under the latter cite an otherwise unparalleled vocative *kako* which in their grammatical analysis is called 'of unknown origin'.¹² The

9. See 'Learn Romani' by Ronald Lee in *Roma*, I, 1, p. 61 (June, 1974).

10. See the entries *papo* and *kako* in Siegmund A. Wolf, *Grosses Wörterbuch der Zigeunersprache* (Bibliographisches Institut, Mannheim, 1960 [hereafter, Wolf]).

11. E.g. the forms *papo* and *kak* occur in Serboianu.

12. Gjerdman-Ljungberg, p. 54.

situation in Greek Romany makes it probable that *paɹo* has served as model for *kak*. It is usually assumed that the former is derived from Greek *παππούς* 'grandfather', vocative *παππού* (but cf. also Greek *πάππος*, a synonym of *παππούς*). I have recorded both *paɹo* and *paɹos* as nominative but only *paɹo* as vocative; the large number of Romany nouns in *-o* may have disturbed a normal pattern of nominative *paɹos*, vocative *paɹo*. Instead of *o kak* 'the uncle' I once heard *o kakos*, and the vocative is always *kako*.¹³ Perhaps the Greek vocatives in *-o* of some widely used demotic first names have helped set the pattern, e.g. *ὁ Νίκος* 'Nick', vocative *Νίκο*.

One final morphological topic should be mentioned for the sake of completeness. In Sampson's discussion of the pluperfect tense,¹⁴ formed on the preterite (as the imperfect is formed on the present) by the addition of a suffix *-as* to the personal endings, he remarked that it 'exists as a somewhat rare tense-form in the Gk., Bulg., Rum., Hung. and Bohm. dialects'. This may indeed have been the case fifty years ago, but no examples occur in my materials nor was I able to elicit any such. If, as I suspect, the pluperfect is no longer in current use, a contributing factor might be that in the Greek verbal system, which also employs two contrasting verbal stems, an imperfect is formed on the present stem but only one past tense is made on the aorist stem. (Gypsy speakers when speaking Greek seem to avoid Greek analytic perfects and pluperfects of the type, *ἔχει φύγει* 'he has left', *εἶχε φύγει* 'he had left'.)

Let me turn now to borrowings of vocabulary and idiom which I shall divide up, purely for convenience, under the three categories of direct loans, verbs fitted into a Romany morphological framework, and translation loans.

In the first category of actual Greek words I shall give only a small sample selection.

For all days of the week the Greek words are used with the exception of *o kurko* 'Sunday' (also used to mean 'week' as in other Romany dialects).¹⁵ Words like *suvlaki* 'spitted roast meat'

13. On the other hand, the generalized form *kako* appears first as a vocative and then as a nominative in a Russian Romany text transcribed by A. P. Barannikov, *The Ukrainian and South Russian Gypsy Dialects* (Leningrad, 1934), p. 122.

14. Sampson, p. 204.

15. Wolf, s.v. *kurko*.

Gk. σουβλάκι and other standard Greek food items consumed by the Gypsies are used unchanged. The word for 'automobile', *aftokin(i)to* Gk. *αὐτοκίνητο* (often in the special sense of 'bus') is common; I once heard the form *aftokinitos*. *Tsiyaro* 'cigarette' and *spirta* 'matches' Gk. *τσιγάρο* and *οπίρτα* are in frequent use although the latter has some rivals (*tšakmapis*, *kibrita*). In general one can say that all technical terms or semi-technical terms (e.g. *psiyio* 'refrigerator' Gk. *ψυγείο*, *tileorasi* 'television' Gk. *τηλεόρασι*, *kaseta* 'cassette' Gk. *κασσέττα*), terms pertaining to the Greek administrative processes, sports terms, and other categories, for which no Romany term was at hand, are supplied by the corresponding Greek words.

Other borrowings are harder to account for. Here is a sampling: *ti ora si* 'what time is it?' (Gk. *τί ὥρα* 'what time' + Rom. *si* 'is'); *sas lako proto čao* 'he was her first child' (*proto* 'first' from Gk. *πρῶτος*, either assimilated to a Romany-like ending or simply influenced by the equivalent Greek neuter, cf. *πρῶτο παιδί* 'first child'); *tu khronu* next year', *tin ali mera* 'the next day' Gk. *τοῦ χρόνου*, *τὴν ἄλλή μέρα*; *o hekimos kerel enchirisi* 'the doctor carries out an operation' (Gk. *ἐγχείρησι* 'operation');¹⁶ some color-names like *prasino* 'green', *kitrino* 'yellow' Gk. *πράσινος*, *κίτρινος*, but the Romany words survive for 'red', 'white', 'black'—*lolo*, *parno*, *kalo*; *deksia* 'right' and *aristera* 'left' Gk. *δεξιά*, *ἀριστερά*; and the cardinal directions 'east', 'west', 'north', 'south', which are likewise borrowed in most other Romany dialects.¹⁷ A number of common Greek phrases are occasionally interspersed in a Romany sentence; *endaksi* Gk. *ἐντάξει* 'all right' is particularly popular, as in Greek itself.

Greek verbs can be absorbed at will into Romany simply by adding the suffix *-erav*, *-arav* to Greek verbal stem. This is so

16. While it is obvious that a Greek word has been introduced, it is perhaps less obvious that the entire phrase is really a calque on the corresponding Greek model, *ὁ γιατρός κάνει ἐγχείρησι*, just as *ti ora si?* is merely Gk. *τί ὥρα εἶναι*; with a substitution of Rom. *si* for Gk. *εἶναι* 'is'.

17. All are missing in the English word index to Gjerdman-Ljungberg. Wolf has no entry for 'west'; he lists one term for 'east', *clistiye*, which is found only in Serboianu; he has only one entry for 'north', *batnos*, which occurs only in a listing by the nineteenth-century scholar, A. F. Pott; Wolf does list three terms for 'south', *dilos* from Hung. *dél*, *jigo* from Czech *jih*, and inherited *pasdiwes* ('half-day' and consequently 'noon', 'south', but marked as rare in this meaning).

common a phenomenon that I have arbitrarily made it into a separate category. The suffix is most probably a semantic extension of the factitive suffix *-er*, *-yer* attributed by Sampson, although perhaps incorrectly, to Skr. *kr-* ‘make, do’.¹⁸ In this dialect it is also used with verbal stems borrowed from other languages, notably in *traisarav* ‘live’ from Rum. *a trăi* ‘live’ (listed by Serboianu¹⁹ for Rumanian Romany under the forms *traiv*, *traiu*, *traizau*) or *yazarav* ‘write’ from Turkish *yazmak* ‘write’.²⁰ Borrowed verbs with this suffix form their preterite regularly in *-erdam*, *-ardem*.

In my materials I find the following typical examples of Greek verbs so borrowed: *nikyasardem yek k'er* ‘I rented a room’²¹ (Gk. *νοικιάσ-* aorist stem of *νοικιάζω* ‘rent’); *kana geli te psonisarel* ‘when she went to buy groceries’ (Gk. *ψωνισ-* aorist stem of *ψωνίζω* ‘buy groceries’); *in khonepsarelas-len* ‘he couldn’t stand them’, i.e. ‘he detested them’ (Gk. *χωνεψ-* aorist stem of *χωνεύω* ‘digest’, used figuratively with a negative, exactly as in the Romany phrase’); *mardas-len khorisardas-len* ‘he hit them, he separated them’ (Gk. *χωρισ-* aorist stem of *χωρίζω* ‘separate’); *khasardem*²² *laki sosten* ‘I lost her panties’ (Gk. *χασ-* aorist stem of *χάνω* ‘lose’).

It will be noted that all the examples cited are derived from the aorist stem of the borrowed Greek verb, and I have not encountered any taken from the present stem. As far as I can judge, this is a general rule, and it should not be regarded as unusual since it also seems to prevail elsewhere; Greek verbs borrowed by other Balkan languages in general display an aorist stem. Since many Greek aorist stems (e.g. from particularly productive formation in *-ώνω*, *-ίζω*) contain an *s*, there may even be a trend in Greek Romany towards turning this formant into *-sarav*, *-sarav*; if so, this might account for a divergent form like the previously cited verb of Rumanian origin *traisarav* ‘live’ or

18. Sampson, p. 112.

19. Serboianu, p. 358.

20. Since most Gypsies could not write, they borrowed a variety of words to express this concept. Wolf lists *pisinav* from Slavic, *irinav* from Hungarian, etc.

21. *K'er* means ‘house, residence’, but since this speaker’s experience is exclusively of one-room dwellings, it means ‘room’ in this context.

22. *Khasarav* occurs also in Rumanian Romany according to Serboianu, p. 325.

the comparable (*v*)*orbisarav* ‘speak’, clearly from Rumanian *a vorbi* ‘speak’.²³

Finally, a great many Greek words and expressions are translated literally into Greek Romany. One of the most obvious is the universal greeting *so keres?* ‘how are you?’ This is literally ‘what are you doing?’ just as Greek τί κάνεις means literally ‘what are you doing?’ but is likewise used as a greeting, ‘how are you?’ Curiously enough, the customary answer to this is the adjective *latšo* or *latši*, depending upon the sex of the interlocutor, i.e. ‘(I am) fine’, as if in answer to the alternative greeting *sar san* ‘how are you?’ which is acceptable but nowhere near as common. (The answer is not modelled on Greek even though there exists an adverb *latšes* which might have been equated to the usual Gk. καλά.)

The Romany verb *inkalav*²⁴ has a cluster of meanings: ‘remove’, ‘take out’, etc. It has evidently been taken as the equivalent of Gk. βγάζω and is therefore used to translate literally the Greek idiom βγάζω το ψωμί μου ‘I earn my living’ lit. ‘I extract my bread’, Romany *inkalav mo manro*.

In a characteristic Greek idiom, one ‘takes a person on the telephone’ i.e. ‘calls someone up’. The Romany phrase *liem-les tilefono* ‘I called him up’ is merely a literal translation of the Greek τὸν πῆρα (στὸ) τηλέφωνο with the Romany verb *lav* (*liem*) replacing Gk. παίρνω (πῆρα).

The adverb *avr(i)al* is found in a number of Romany dialects with the meaning ‘outside’. In Greek Romany, however, the expression *džanav-les avral* comes to mean ‘I know it by heart’, and it is clear that this is simply a calque on Gk. τὸ ξέρω ἀπέξω in which the Greek adverb ἀπέξω ‘outside’ has acquired this same idiomatic meaning.

The Romany phrase *lesko dat gelo askeri*²⁵ ‘his father went into

23. A very few borrowed Greek verbs do not conform to this pattern, notably *zalisavav* ‘be dizzy’ from Gk. ζαλίσ- aorist stem of ζαλίζομαι ‘be dizzy’. Here the formant *-avav* is best taken as passive used to imitate the medio-passive of the Greek original.

24. Cf. *inchalaváu* and *inchaláu* in Serboianu, p. 328.

25. Romany *o askeri* may be directly borrowed from Turkish *asker* ‘soldier’. There is however a Greek derivative τὸ δσκέρι now meaning ‘troop, crowd’ which may have influenced the Romany word. In the nineteenth century, e.g. in the memoirs of Gen. Makriannis, τὰ δσκέρια was in common use to mean ‘Turkish soldiers’.

the army', i.e. 'entered upon his compulsory military service' does not sound conspicuously idiomatic, but the syntactic pattern is unusual enough to make it probable that here too there was a Greek model, *ὁ πατέρας του πήγε στρατιώτης*, lit. 'his father went soldier' in which, as in the Romany, the word 'soldier' implies 'as a soldier'.

One final example may serve to demonstrate very aptly how the process of bilingual accommodation works in practice. When asked about her knowledge of Turkish, a woman answered as follows: *akyerav-len ama naṣti vorbisarav-len* 'I understand it but I can't speak it.' Normally, in this dialect as elsewhere, references to languages are expressed by an adverbial modifier, as e.g. *džanes khorakhanes?* 'do you speak (lit. do you know) Turkish?' Alternatively, *čip* 'tongue, language', a feminine noun, may be used with the appropriate adjective, as *balamani čip* 'Greek language'. In the phrase cited, however, since the pronoun *len* is plural, she was really saying, 'I understand *them* but I can't speak *them*.' The motivation is quite evident. In spoken Greek one would normally say: *καταλαβαίνω τὰ τούρκικα ἀλλὰ δὲν τὰ μιλῶ* 'I understand Turkish but I don't speak it'. Here *τα τούρκικα* 'Turkish' is regularly expressed in the plural, and so this speaker, accustomed as a bilingual to the Greek usage, has copied it in Romany by using a plural pronoun to refer to the language.

I should like to conclude by translating and annotating two short sample texts in Greek Romany which may illustrate rather more graphically the procedures I have been cataloguing.

The first text comes from a young woman of about 28 describing an evening on the town and its consequences:

Ti đeftera sas mo alav. Pherdem mi poski pares . . . Gilem ka e jungaria . . . Sabahlen mo rom khales-pes mansa soske gelem ka e jungaria.

'Monday was my name-day. I filled my pocket with money . . . I went to a *buzuki*-joint . . . In the morning (next morning) my husband had it out with me because I went to the *buzuki*-joint.'

ti ðeftera ‘Monday’, Greek word and used in a Greek construction, *τὴ Δευτέρα* (Greek accusative case in expression of time). *mo alav* lit. ‘my name’, but since in Greek *ἦταν τ’ ὄνομά μου*, lit. ‘it was my name’ comes to mean ‘it was my name-day’, the Romany has also acquired this latter meaning.

pherdem mi poski pares lit. ‘I filled my pocket, money.’ In Greek ‘fill’ is often construed with a double accusative: *γέμισα (γιόμισα) τὴν τσέπη μου χρήματα*. This has probably influenced the speaker’s phrase.

gilem ka e yungaria, this is a direct translation into Romany of a Greek phrase, *πῆγα στὰ μουζούκια* ‘I went to a *buzuki*-joint’ lit. ‘to the *buzukia*’, plural of the popular Greek musical instrument, the *buzuki*.

khalas-pes mansa ‘he had it out with me’ lit. ‘ate himself with me.’ This idiom, meaning ‘to quarrel’, is found not only in Greek but in other Balkan languages; it is in fact a well-known ‘Balkanism’.²⁶

The second text is from a boy of twelve, explaining how he had broken his arm:

Bešavas ka e skalakia ta spildas-man palal mo ksaðerfo, ta pelem, ta paglem mo vas ka dui meryes.

‘I was sitting on the steps, and my cousin pushed me from behind and I fell, and I broke my arm in two places.’

ka e skalakia ‘on the steps’, borrowed Greek word *σκαλάκια* to mean ‘steps’; it has been preceded by a Romany plural article, *e*, and has been assimilated to a large class of Romany nouns in *-i* with plurals in *-ia* (e.g. *mak’i* ‘fly’, plural *mak’ia*).

mo ksaðerfo ‘my cousin’, borrowed Greek word *ξάδερφος* demotic form of *ἐξάδελφος*) including a non-Romany phoneme, *ð*, here assimilated to the common Romany pattern of nouns in *-o* by dropping the final Greek *-s*.

mo vas ‘my arm’; in Greek *τὸ χέρι* can mean both ‘hand and ‘arm’, and *vas* accordingly has these two meanings in Greek

²⁶ Sandfeld, p. 7, lists many examples including Gk. *τρώγεται μὲ τὴ γυναῖκα* ‘he quarrels with his wife’.

Romany. While this is also true in other Romany dialects, the basic meaning is almost certainly 'hand' (ultimately from *Skr hasta-* 'hand'), and it bears this meaning only in Sampson and Paspati.

ka dui meryes 'in two places', borrowed Greek word taken over in its Greek plural, *μεριές*, usually meaning 'sides, parts'; the plural does not conform to a Romany pattern.

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